

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 L-03 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 OMB-01
/073 W

-----130554 071734Z /45

R 071612Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8216
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY MADRID

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USEEC

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, FR
SUBJECT: THE LABOR SCENE: FALL MANEUVERS BEGIN

REF: (A) PARIS 25418, (B) PARIS 25437

1. SUMMARY: WITH THE REOPENING OF THE WAGE NEGOTIATIONS IN THE PUBLIC AND NATIONALIZED SECTORS, THE TACTICAL SITUATION AMONGST THE UNIONS IS CLEAR. THE CFDT AND CGT, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE TEACHERS FEDERATION (FEN), WILL TRY TO USE THOSE TROUBLED NEGOTIATIONS AS A VEHICLE FOR LEVERING FO INTO ANOTHER POLITICALLY PROFITABLE "NATIONAL STRIKE", IN WHICH THE OTHER REFORMIST UNIONS WILL HAVE NO CHOICE AGAIN BUT TO JOIN. HOWEVER, ALTHOUGH THE CGT-CFDT ALLIANCE, WITH FEN IN TOW, IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO HOLD TOGETHER

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UNTIL AT LEAST AFTER THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS NEXT YEAR, THE HONEYMOON BETWEEN THOSE TWO UNIONS IS OVER; AND A VICTORY OF THE LEFT WILL PROBABLY RESULT IN A SPLIT. UNTIL MARCH 1978, HOWEVER, EVERYONE IS BEING VERY CAREFUL TO KEEP UP PRETENSES, PARTICULARLY GIVEN THE SITUATION WITHIN THE UNION OF THE LEFT ITSELF.

END SUMMARY.

2. THE WAGE CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS IN THE PUBLIC AND NATIONALIZED SECTORS WERE RESUMED, AFTER THE AUGUST HOLIDAYS, ON SEPTEMBER 5 (CIVIL SERVICE AND COAL INDUSTRY), SEPTEMBER 6 (ELECTRICITY, GAS AND PARIS TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY) AND SEPTEMBER 7 (RAILWAYS) WITH, TO DATE, POOR RESULTS POLITICALLY. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED A 2.6 PERCENT WAGE INCREASE EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 1, THE DISCUSSIONS ON MAKING UP THE EMPLOYEES' ALLEGED LOSS IN REAL INCOME HAVE GONE NOWHERE, AND BITTER PUBLIC COMMENTS ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S LACK OF GOOD FAITH HAVE BEEN MADE BOTH BY THE HEAD OF FO'S CIVIL SERVICE UNION AND FEN LEADER HENRY. PREDICTABLY, THE CGT AND CFDT ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WOULD NOT SIGN ANY AGREEMENT WITH THE GOVERNMENT; AND BOTH UNIONS ARE REPEATING THEIR DENUNCIATIONS OF THE BARRE PLAN AND THE NEED FOR "ACTION" IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR. THEIR CALLS ARE FINDING A READY ECHO IN THE FEN, WHOSE PRESIDENT (HENRY) HAS ALSO POINTEDLY STRESSED THE DESIRABILITY OF INCLUDING FO IN SUCH ACTIONS. IT IS QUITE OBVIOUS THAT THE CFDT, CGT AND FEN HOPE TO AGAIN USE THE FO CIVIL SERVANTS' DISSATISFACTION AND POWER WITHIN THEIR CONFEDERATION TO PULL OFF A REPEAT OF THE MAY 24 NATIONAL STRIKE (SEE PARIS 14358) AS PART OF THEIR EFFORT TO ELECT THE LEFT IN 1978.

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3. THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE CGT, CFDT, AND FEN WILL BE SUCCESSFUL WOULD SEEM, IN LARGE PART, TO DEPEND ON HOW THE GOVERNMENT ON THE ONE HAND AND FO,

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AND TO A LESSER EXTENT THE CFTC AND CGC ON THE OTHER, PLAY THEIR HANDS. NEITHER SIDE HAS ANY INTEREST IN SEEING ANOTHER NATIONAL STRIKE TAKE PLACE, BUT THEIR INTERESTS CLEARLY ARE NOT IDENTICAL AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR RANK AND FILE ARE FEELING PUT UPON.

4. THESE DEVELOPMENTS COME IN THE MIDST OF A SERIES OF MEETINGS WITHIN THE MAJOR UNIONS' EXECUTIVES AND FO LEADER BERGERON (WHO HAS CANCELLED HIS TRIP TO THE TUC CONGRESS) WILL GIVE WHAT IS BILLED AS A MAJOR SPEECH ON SEPTEMBER 9 AT THE PARIS FO MEETING. LOOKING OVER THE HEADLINES, ONE WOULD ASSUME THAT THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONGST THE THREE POLITICALLY COMMITTED UNIONS ARE UNCHANGED; THE CGT, CFDT AND FEN REMAIN ALLIED TO ELECT A GOVERNMENT OF THE LEFT AND TO COOPERATE WITH IT IN TRANSFORMING FRENCH SOCIETY. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BUT IN FACT, THE VERY PROSPECTS OF A LEFT VICTORY IN THE ELECTIONS AND THE PUBLICATION OF THE CFDT AND CGT PROGRAMS HAVE ACTUALLY SPOTLIGHTED THE DIVISIONS THAT EXIST. THE CGT-CFDT POST-VACATION ALLIANCE SO FAR IS LIMITED TO KEEPING UP PRESSURE ON THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT, AND ELECTING ONE OF THE LEFT. THEY WILL MEET NEXT WEEK TO CONSIDER THEIR RESPECTIVE PROGRAMS, AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF DEVELOPING A JOINT SET OF DEMANDS FOR PRESENTATION TO A FUTURE LEFT GOVERNMENT. BUT THE CGT SHOWS NO SIGNS OF EMBRACING AUTOGESTION, AND THE CFDT CANNOT VERY WELL DROP ITS PRINCIPAL ARTICLE OF FAITH IN ANY SUCH SET OF DEMANDS. THIS MAKES IT LIKELY THE TWO UNIONS WILL PART COMPANY UNDER A GOVERNMENT OF THE LEFT (SEE PARIS A-280 OF JULY 26). HOWEVER, FOR THE MOMENT ELECTING SUCH A

GOVERNMENT IS THE ORDER OF THE DAY AND, GIVEN THE
APPARENT STATE OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE
POLITICAL PARTIES COMPOSING THE UNION OF THE LEFT,
AND THE SORRY RESULTS OF THE CFDT'S ATTEMPT TO INJECT
ITSELF INTO THE DEBATE (REF A), BOTH CONFEDERATIONS
ARE BEING VERY CAREFUL ABOUT WHAT THEY SAY AND DO;
AND THE CFDT APPEARS TO BE VERY ANXIOUS NOT TO DO
ANYTHING WHICH MIGHT MAKE THE COMMUNISTS THINK THAT
THEIR BRAND OF SOCIALIST IS AN UNRELIABLE PARTNER,
HOWEVER TRUE THAT MAY BE.
HARTMAN

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